PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 19 Number 14 December 2022

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, 11th December 2022: Ananthagiri Hills, Vikarabad. Meeting Point-1: NMDC, Masab Tank, 5.30AM; Meeting Point-2: Telangana State Police Academy, Chilkur Balaji Temple Road, 5.45AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Gowthama P (Mobile: 9440910967)

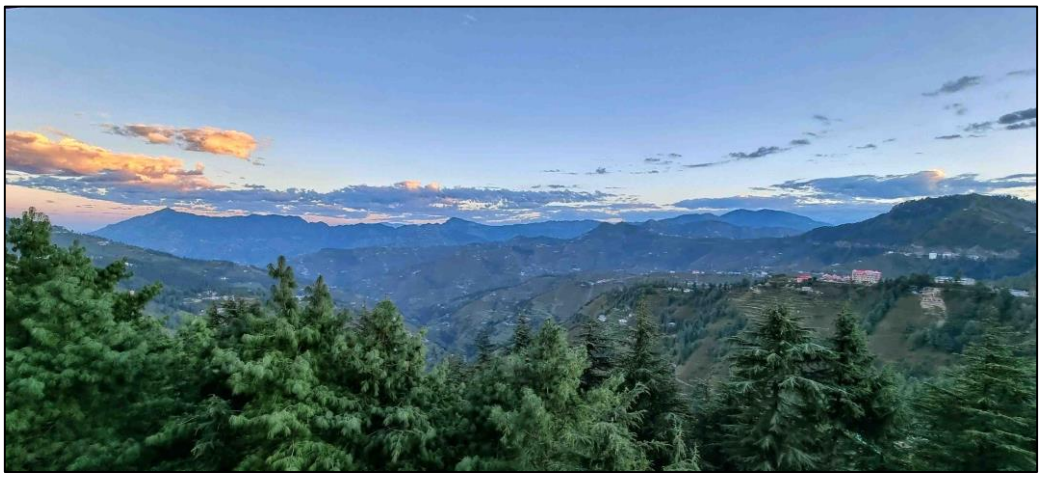
Besides being a pleasant woodland walk, Ananthagiri has always been very productive from the birding viewpoint, and is a paradise for forest birds. One can see Flycatchers, White-eyes, Chloropsis, Orange-headed Thrush, Nightjars, among others. The Indian Pitta and the Brown Fish Owl have been reported earlier.

This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast/snacks, and rain gear if required. Strict Covid protocols will be followed, so please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. Deccan Birders T-Shirts and caps will be available for sale.

TRIP-2: Outstation camp at Eaglenest WLS, Arunachal Pradesh. Details will be shared separately. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 9738840070)

Trip Report: Theog, Himachal Pradesh, October 04-07, 2022

Text & Photos: Aditya Rao



A view at Theog

After a long hiatus after 2 years of Covid, we as a family decided to go on a vacation. We had been to Shimla and Manali before and we had heard about Theog, a quaint town nestled in the Himalayas. We had the good fortune of staying in Theog, situated in Shimla Dist, for about 4 days. Being a family of nature lovers and birders, literally every trip that we take as a family has birding thrown in along with a lot of nature walks.

Rock Bunting

October was a low season (also much before the migrants begin their sojourn south) and of course holiday times for kids due to Dussehra, so we headed off to the hills via Chandigarh. While it was meant to be a bonding trip with family away from the maddening urban chaos, birding was interweaved or incidental in virtually every activity we undertook.

Asian Barred Owlet

We also drove a day to trek within the Shimla Water Catchment WLS, which is a must do activity; though birding is hard given the thick deodar forests, but more than 150+ birds have been reported here and I was able to get great pictures of one of my favorite birds – the Rufous-bellied Niltava.

Rufous-bellied Niltava

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

Deodar forest

The Deodar forest was a sight to behold – walking around these lush forests is simply surreal, and it is also a great habitat for birds.

Lush forest at Shimla Water Catchment WLS

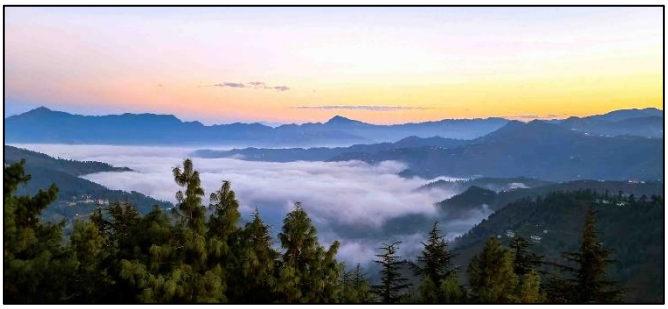
Coal Tit

The lush forests of Shimla Water Catchment Wildlife Sanctuary are a must visit for nature and bird lovers. Whilst the birds are very hard to find due to thick canopy, the nature trail for 15+ kms is simply amazing.

Walking trail at Shimla Water Catchment WLS

We also enjoyed walking the trails through Shimla Water Catchment WLS, including an extremely well maintained walkway for more than 8km.

Eurasian Hobby



Heaven on Earth: A view at Theog

Dark-sided Flycatcher

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch

Most of the birding was incidental, but given that it is lower Himalayas, it will never disappoint you. We were able to identify the following birds:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Black Francolin	*Francolinus francolinus*	20	Himalayan Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucogenys*
2	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	21	Hume's Warbler	*Phylloscopus humei*
3	Oriental Turtle Dove	*Streptopelia orientalis*	22	Grey-hooded Warbler	*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*
4	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*	23	Black-throated Bushtit	*Aegithalos concinnus*
5	Himalayan Griffon	*Gyps himalayensis*	24	Streaked Laughingthrush	*Trochalopteron lineatum*
6	Mountain Hawk Eagle	*Nisaetus nipalensis*	25	Rufous Sibia	*Heterophasia capistrata*
7	Asian Barred Owlet	*Glaucidium cuculoides*	26	Dark-sided Flycatcher	*Muscicapa sibirica*
8	Great Barbet	*Psilopogon virens*	27	Rufous-bellied Niltava	*Niltava sundara*
9	Himalayan Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos himalayensis*	28	Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus caeruleus*
10	Eurasian Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	29	Ultramarine Flycatcher	*Ficedula superciliaris*
11	Eurasian Hobby	*Falco subbuteo*	30	Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*
12	Eurasian Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*	31	Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	*Monticola rufiventris*
13	Red-billed Blue Magpie	*Urocissa erythroryncha*	32	Grey Bushchat	*Saxicola ferreus*
14	Eurasian Nutcracker	*Nucifraga caryocatactes*	33	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
15	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	34	Russet Sparrow	*Passer cinnamomeus*
16	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	*Culicicapa ceylonensis*	35	Brown Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula nipalensis*
17	Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*	36	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	*Chloris spinoides*
18	Green-backed Tit	*Parus monticolus*	37	Rock Bunting	*Emberiza cia*
19	Cinereous Tit	*Parus cinereus*			

Some other photos taken during the trip:

Himalayan Bulbul

Himalayan Griffon

Ultramarine Flycatcher female

Great Barbet

Mountain Hawk Eagle

Himalayan Woodpecker

Rufous Sibia

Eurasian Jay

Black Redstart female

Green-backed Tit

Oriental Turtle Dove

Grey Bushchat male

Grey Bushchat female

Grey-hooded Warbler

Red-billed Blue Magpie

Streaked Laughingthrush

Indian Grey Langur

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

Black-throated Bushtit

* * *

Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

Little Stint (Jamnagar, September 23, 2021)

Little Stint (Chennai, February 18, 2021)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Scolopacidae
Genus: *Calidris*
Species: *C. minuta*
Size: 13-15 cm

Description & distribution: The Little Stint is a small-sized wader that breeds in the arctic regions of Europe and Asia, and is a long-distance migrant, wintering in the Mediterranean region, the Middle East, Madagascar, South Asia and Africa, with some birds straying to North America and Australia. The genus name comes from the Ancient Greek *kalidris* (or *skalidris*), which was a term used by Aristotle to describe some grey waterside birds. It has mottled dark brown, greyish-brown or dusky upperparts and whitish underparts, straight, fine blackish bill and dark legs with unwebbed toes. It is one of the two stints with dark legs seen in India (the other being Red-necked). Irises are dark, and it shows a faint whitish eye-ring. Rump and middle tail feathers are dark brown, while the outer tail feathers are smoky brown. When in flight, grey sides to tail and a narrow whitish wing bar may be visible. The summer (breeding) plumage is darker, with rufous fringes to upperpart feathers. A rufous-orange wash on the face, neck sides and breast is also seen, besides a white throat and well-marked white V on the mantle. Sexes are alike.

In winter, the eastern population of the Little Stint is seen throughout India, as well as in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Habitat & behaviour: The Little Stint is gregarious and usually seen in medium to large flocks, usually along with other small waders like Dunlin, Sand Plovers, Ringed Plovers, Sandpipers etc. It frequents coastal areas, lake edges, paddyfields, lagoons, tidal creeks, estuaries, marshes, intertidal mudflats and salt pans. Little Stints are given to take the occasional flight in large numbers, and the coordinated banking and turning, alternatively flashing white (underparts) and silvery-brown (upperparts) is one of the most beautiful sights to watch. While foraging, the flock spreads out, running around actively on the mud, picking up the aquatic insects, ants, crustaceans and mollusks that form the main part of their diet. They may also take mosquitoes, larval and adult flies, small beetles and plant matter. Its call is a sharp *stit*, a soft musical *wit-wit-wit*, and a low *tr-rr* or a weak *pi-pi-pi*, uttered in flight.

Nesting: The Little Stint breeds generally between June and July in most of its breeding range in North-eastern Europe and Siberia. The typical nest is usually a shallow cup-shaped depression on grassy marshland, lined with willow leaves or other plant matter. The usual clutch consists of 3-5 oval eggs, greenish to off-white or buffish stone coloured, spotted and blotched with reddish brown. Chicks hatch out after 20-25 days of incubation, and are precocial, able to feed themselves almost immediately.

Local name: The Little Stint is known as *'Chhota panlowwa'* in Hindi and Marathi, *'Kosu ullan'* in Tamil and *'Kalapag khichdiyo'* or *'Nano khichdiyo'* in Gujarati.

* * *

We wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2023